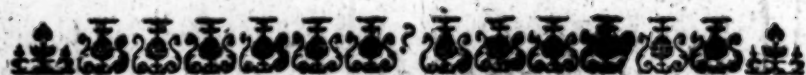


THE
Necessity of Obedience
TO 2,
Ecclesiastical Governours,
AND
The Sin and Danger
OF
DISOBEDIENCE.

Deliver'd in a SERMON at *Bridgwater*,
before the Reverend the Clergy, October
the 20th. 1710.

BY
Charles Michell, M. A. Rector of *Otterhampton*,
and Vicar of *Cannington* in *Somersetshire*.

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Sickness.



To the Right Reverend Father in
God, G E O R G E, by
Divine Permission, Lord Bishop
of Bath and Wells,

May it please Your LORDSHIP.

IT would have been Unpardonable Pre-
sumption in me, to prefix Your Name
to so mean a Performance, were I not assur'd
of Your LORDSHIP's Candor and Good-
ness to be such, as not to dispise what is
sincerely offer'd by the meanest of Your Clergy.
Nor could I better defend my Self against
the Censures of a Criticall and Ill-natur'd
World, than by flying to the Sanctuary of Your
LORDSHIP's Patronage, whose affable and
obliging Temper, is enough to make Malice
it Self kind, and to render Envy candid and
favourable on my side.

My

The Epistle Dedicatory,

My LORD,

I am very sensible of my own Incapacity, not only to manage such a Subject as I ought, but also in respect of Others of Your LORDSHIPS Clergy, whom God has blest with Greater Parts and Abilities than my Self: But then, my Lord, even the Divine Goodness it Self, is describ'd by nothing more, than by accepting his Poor Creatures, according to what they have, and not according to what they have not. And that Servant to whom were committed but Two Talents all, yet by employing them in his Master's Service, was applauded with an Euge, as well as he who received Five, &c. Love for a good Cause will creep, my Lord, when it cannot go, exert it self in small Matters, when greater cannot be perform'd, which, notwithstanding, will be render'd the more acceptable to the World by Your Lordships Favour and Blessing, which is therefore humbly desir'd by

Your Lordships most Dutiful,
and most Obedient Son and Servant,
Charles Michell.

(1)

S E R M O N,

Preach'd before the CLERGY at a
VISITATION, &c. October the 20th,
1710.

Heb. 13. 17. *Obey them that have the Rule over you, and submit your selves, for they watch for your Souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with Joy, and not with Grief: For that is unprofitable for you.*

THE Apostle in the Conclusion of all his Epistles, does express a very deep and tender Concern for the Flock committed to his Charge, either by exhorting them to the Practice of some excellent Christian Duties, or by Praying for some Blessings to promote the Happiness and Salvation of their Souls: So likewise

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wise in this Epistle to the Hebrews, after an earnest recommendation of Brotherly Love, of Charity, and of being kind in receiving Strangers, he then concludes in putting them in mind of their Duty, in being Subject to those who rule over them in the Lord.

Obeÿ them that have the rule over you, and Submit your selves, for they watch for your Souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with Joy, and not with Grief, for that is unprofitable, (or rather destructive or pernicious unto you.)

IN which words there are contain'd these two following Propositions:

F I R S T that there is a set Order of Persons, Divinely constituted, to be Rulers or Governours in the Christian Church.

S E C O N D L Y, that 'tis our Duty to Obeÿ them, and submit our selves to their Doctrine and Discipline, *for they watch for our Souls &c.*

F I R S T, then for the First of these, (viz.) that there is a set Order of Persons, Divinely constituted to be Rulers or Governours, in the Christian Church. Hence it is that the Church is styl'd, *the Kingdom of God, and the*

the Kingdom of Heaven, Matt. 6. 33. and Matt. 3. 2. Meaning that it is a Spiritual Society, as an Earthly Kingdom is a Temporal one, and that the one can no more subsist without Government than the other.

BUT, that I might speak more clearly and distinctly to the First Proposition, I shall endeavour to shew the several Sorts and Kinds of these Ecclesiastical Rulers, and by what Names they are dignify'd and distinguish'd.

NOW of these some were Extraordinary, endow'd with Power from on High, being immediately commission'd and authoriz'd by Christ himself: And these were the Disciples and Apostles of our Lord, who were by him sent forth to Preach the Gospel unto all the World, and this they did in the *demonstration of the Spirit and with Power*, God himself bearing them Witness, with many Signs and Wonders, with divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, insomuch as they became the Wonder of the World, and the Amazement of Mankind, converting whole Nations and Kingdoms, making them Holy Profelytes, and Zealous Professors of the Doctrine of their great Lord and Master.

BUT then, these Extraordinary Teachers, were only the Blessings and Advantages of the

Primitive Times, for which Reason the like are not to be expected by us now in these latter Ages: And therefore if any at this Time should pretend to have an immediate Commission from God, either by a Voice from Heaven from without, or by any extraordinary Impulse of the Spirit from within, he ought to attest it by the same Proofs and Credentials as the Apostles did, that is, by Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost. For if they are immediately inspir'd and sent from God, they are not sent for the Benefit of themselves alone, but also for that of others, and then the same God who did thus send them, would also bear Witness to them, as he did to the Apostles, that is with Signs and Wonders, and divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost.

NEITHER must every Sign, or every Wonder make us presently conclude, that they are Inspir'd and sent by God, for there are Lying Signs and Lying Wonders, as the Scripture assures us; and we are told that the coming of Antichrist, will be after the *working of Satan, with all Power, and Signs, and Lying Wonders*, 2. Thess. 2. 9. And our blessed Lord informs us, that in the latter Days, *false Prophets shall arise, and shew Signs and Wonders to seduce, if it were possible the very Elect*, Mark 13. 22. For which Reason he greatly

greatly cautions us against all such Cheats and Impostors, who should come in his Name, pretending an extraordinary Commission from him: *take heed* (says he) *Behold I have told you all things*, ver. 23. And St. John would have us not to *believe every Spirit*; but to try the Spirits whether they be of God, that is by the Scripture to prove and examine their Doctrines, which is the Rule and Standard of our Faith, by which we may distinguish the true Preachers of the Gospel, from false and pretended Ones.

IF the Doctrines such Men do preach be contrary to the Scripture, and that Rule of Faith we ought to judge them by; if they tend to corrupt our Morals, and to draw us off from our Obedience to our Superiours, or from the true Service of God and Religion; if instead of Piety and Devotion, they advance Irreligion, Profaneness and Immorality; or in short any thing, that is contrary to the plain reveal'd Will of God, we must reject them and their Doctrines too, tho' there were a thousand Miracles wrought in the Confirmation of them.

IF there arise among you (says Moses) a Prophet, or a Dreamer of Dreames, and giveth thee a Sign or a Wonder: and the Sign or the Wonders

Wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other Gods (which thou hast not known) and let us serve them: thou shalt not hearken to the words of that Prophet, or that Dreamer of Dreames, for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your Heart and with all your Soul, Deut. 13. 1, 2, 3.

GOD has now so fully manifested himself in these last Days by speaking unto us by his Son, insomuch that now we are to expect no new Discovery or Revelation of his Divine Will: This is what the Apostle urges with a particular Emphasis and Vehemency of Speech, Gal. 1. 8. *Tho' we (says he) or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have received, let him be accursed.* And the very same Words, he repeats again in the following Verse, to the End that this Advice might make the deeper Impression on us, in guarding us against the Impostures of all such Enthusiasts, who shall pretend themselves to be extraordinary Messengers sent from God.

SECONDLY, The other Sort or Kind of Rulers or Governours, in the Christian Church, might be term'd Ordinary, having their Commission and Authority not immediately

ately from Christ, but mediately from the Apostles and their Successors: And these are call'd by the Name of Bishops, Priests and Deacons; which Subordination of Pastours and Governours are plainly to be prov'd from Scripture and Authority.

A S for the First of these, Episcopacy, that it was Instituted and Ordain'd by Christ, may be evidently prov'd from Scripture. For is it not said, Luke 6. 9. that our Lord *called unto him his Disciples*, and out of them made Choice of Twelve, whom he also named *Apostles*? Now why should Christ separate these Twelve from the rest, and make such a remarkable Difference and Distinction between them and the other Disciples, were not the Latter subordinate to the former?

A N D that Bishops and Apostles were of one and the same Signification, is evident enough to any Impartial and considerate Man: for we are very well assured that St. *James* was Bishop of *Jerusalem*, whom notwithstanding St. *Paul* calls an Apostle, Gal. 1. 19. *Titus* also was Bishop of *Crete*, yet was he Number'd among the Apostles of the Church, 2. Cor. 8. 23. which plainly proves that Bishops and Apostles were Terms equivalent, and signified one and the same thing.

B U T

BUT to evade the Force of this Argument some pretend, that this Subordination of Pastors was only instituted for the Age of the Apostles, and that after that it was to expire and to have an End. But they may as well say, that the Holy Sacraments were to continue no longer than the Age of the Apostles, which is absurd and irrational; nay that all the Gospel Laws and Ordinances were then to cease which is equally absurd and irrational.

BESIDES, if this Subordination of Pastors were to cease after the Times of the Apostles, How came it to pass, that the Apostles were so careful that Elders should be Ordained in every City? And don't we Read in the Acts of several Rules given how such Ministers might be chosen for the future? which is a plain Argument that the Ministry was to continue to succeeding Ages, even to the End of the World.

AND so far I am of my Lord of Sarum's Opinion "For we cannot think (says he) that
 " all this (Meaning the Ministry) belong'd
 " only to the Infancy of the Church, and that
 " 'twas to be laid aside by her when she had
 " farther advanced: For when we consider,
 " that in the Beginning of Christianity, there
 " was such a Liberal Effusion of the Holy Spirit
 " it poured out on such Numbers, who
 had

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“ had very extraordinary Credentials, Miracles,
“ and the Gift of Tongues to prove their Mis-
“ sion; it does not seem so necessary in such
“ a Time, or rather for the sake of such a
“ Time, only, to have settl'd these Functi-
“ ons in the Church, and that the Apostles
“ should Ordain Elders in every Church:
“ those extraordinary Gifts that were then,
“ might have served in that Time, without
“ any Authoritative Settlement, so as to por-
“ cure to Men, so qualified, all due Regard.
“ We have therefore much better reason to con-
“ clude that this *viz.* an Ordinary Ministry,
“ was settl'd at that Time with respect to the
“ following Ages; which as they were to fall
“ off from that Zeal and purity, which
“ did then Reign among them, so they need-
“ ed Rule and Government to maintain the Uni-
“ ty of the Church, and the Order of Sacred
“ Things. And for that Reason chiefly we
may conclude, that the Apostles settled Order
and Government in the Church, not so much
for the Age in which they themselves liv'd,
but because it would be necessary for succeeding
Ages.

And as this is Evident from Scripture, so like-
wise 'tis no less apparent from Authority too:
For altho' there have been Disputes about the
Subordinancy of the Ministry, yet there are
scarce any but own the Settlement of some
Ministry

Ministry to be of perpetual necessity in the Christian Church, it being what has been Universally approv'd of by the Suffrage of Wise Men in all Ages.

A N D as for Episcopal Ministry which we of the Church of England do so earnestly contend for as the Institution of it is purely Divine, So it has been submitted to by the Catholick Church in the best and purest Ages. *Eusebius* tells us, that in the very Times of the Apostles there was a Bishop plac'd over every Church, and he gives us a Catalogue of the Names of those Bishops who succeeded each other in the principal Churches. *St. Ignatius*, who was one of the Apostolical Fathers, makes it his whole Business to advance the Authority of Bishops, and that great Honour and Obedience which is due to 'em upon the account of that Authority.

I F from the Apostolical Times, we proceed to the following Ages, we shall find all along, that a Succession of Bishops was kept up in the Church, *Aerius* being the first that ever oppos'd it, for which he was reproach'd by all the Orthodox Clergy of his own Age, and Posterity never mentions his Name without Infamy and Indignation ever since.

IF

IF again from these Times, we come a little nearer to our own, even to the Times of the *Reformation*, we shall perceive there were no Enemies to Episcopacy, and altho' our Dissenting Brethren do report that *Calvin* was no Friend to it, yet in his Epistle to Arch Bishop *Cranmer*, he expresses himself in such a Manner, as sufficiently declares his high Esteem and Veneration for that Sacred Order: *Reverende Domine! clarissime Præsul! et Mibi reverende!* were his own Words to that most Reverend Father of our Church.

In his Treatise of the Necessity of *Reformation*, he tells us, *If Bishops were such, as did not like that of Rome, Lord it over God's Heritage, their Authority ought to be submitted to with the profoundest Reverence and Obedience.* And *Beza* can scarce be perswaded, that there are any such Monsters among Men, who have arrived to that degree of folly and Madness as to reject the whole Order of Bishops, which if there be (says he) *absit ut quisquam illorum furoribus assentiatur.*

BUT our Adversaries reply, that the Scripture makes no distinction between Bishops and Presbyters, and that the Words are terms equivalent, signifying one and the same thing: for this, they produce the Authority of St. Paul

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Paul, who in his *Epistle to Titus* seems to give the Character of a Bishop to any of the *Presbyters*. But to this I answer, the *Apostle*, in that *Epistle*, gives us only the Character of a Bishop in general, but neither there, nor any where else is the Title of a Bishop attributed to a *Presbyter*, but then a Bishop is often times call'd by both of those Names.

A S for the other Sacred Order of Persons (*viz.*) *Presbyters*, and *Deacons*, there is such plain Mention made of them in *St. Pauls* *Epistles*, as that 'tis needless to spend any Time in the Vindication of them.

A N D thus having prov'd that there is a set Order of Persons, Divinely constituted to be Rulers or Governours in the Christian Church, and also by what Names they are dignified and distinguish'd, I am in the next Place to shew that 'tis our Duty to submit to them: This I shall endeavour to prove.

F I R S T from the Reasonableness of the thing it self: And,

S E C O N D L Y, From the Dangerous Inconveniency that does alway attend the contrary.

F I R S T, that 'tis our Duty to obey those
who

who rule over us, and submit ourselves to their Doctrine and Discipline, I'll prove from the Reasonableness of the thing it self.

FOR where the Terms of any Communion are Good and Lawfull; when our Spiritual Rulers enjoin nothing that is Sinful and contrary to the Word of God, then Obedience and Submission becomes our just and reasonable Duty, and all Disobedience, sinful and unwarrantable. And that the Terms of our Communion are good and Lawful; that the Governours of our Church enjoin nothing that is Sinful or contrary to the Word of God, is most evident from the practice of those, who on Occasion will Conform: for by such an Occasional Conformity they must own one of these two Things, either the Terms of our Communion to be innocent and lawful, or themselves to be the worst of Hypocrites, in conforming to that which they believe to be unlawful. And then, what is this but to Sin Wilfully, with a high Hand and a Brazen Forehead, doing *despite even to the spirit of grace?* Nay what is it but Judas like, to betray and sell their Saviour for Advantage, counting *the Blood of the Covenant an Unholy thing*, by making it subservient to such Vile and Wicked Purposes

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I F they say, *We can Communicate with you in some things, but not in all*: I answer, this is but a pitiful Shift and an Evasion, and hath nothing of Sense or Argument in it: For by that one Solemn Act of our Religion, of receiving the Sacrament according to the *Church of England*, they must own, what was said before, either themselves to be very ill Men, or else the Terms of our Communion to be all Innocent and Lawful.

THE most that they can say for themselves is, *That they have a Toleration; That the Government gives them Liberty of Conscience to serve God in their own Way, and according to their Opinions*. To which I answer, that no *Toleration*, or *Liberty of Conscience* can alter the Nature of Things, and make that to be Innocent which in its own Nature is Sinful or Unlawful. For supposing the Laws against Stealing, Robbery and Murther were all suspended, would therefore Stealing, Robbery and Murther be no Sins?

TO make this plain by a few easie and familiar Examples: A Man, for Instance, has an extravagant Son, whom he permits to walk in the Sight of his own Eyes, and in the Ways of his own Heart, because he is stubborn and will not be rul'd; would therefore the Disobedience

dience of that Prodigal be no Sin? Even so the King and Parliament, once like kind and indulgent Fathers of their Country, sometimes by Cords of Gentleness, sometimes by severe Threatnings and Chastisements, did endeavour to draw our Dissenting Brethren to the Church, as by Law establish'd; but when neither Kindness could lead, nor Severity drive them to *Obedience*, then for Peace and Quietness Sake they gave them a *Toleration* because like extravagant Sons, they would submit to no Order or Government.

ANOTHER Instance may be taken from the Permission of Divorce among the *Jews*, which from the Beginning (as our Saviour observes) *was not so*, yet it was permitted to the *Jews* by *Moses*, for no other Reason, but for the Hardness of their Hearts: So likewise among us too, *Toleration*, or *Liberty of Conscience* is allow'd for no other Reason, but for the Hardness of some Mens Hearts, but from the Beginning of Christianity it was not so, as we our selves are assur'd, not only from Scripture, but from the History of those Blessed and Primitive Times, in the which Men were of one Mind, and of one Soul, continuing *stedfastly in the Apostle's Doctrine*, Acts, 2. 42. But don't we (say they) *continue in the Apostle's Doctrine*? Is not our Faith the very same with

yours of the Church of England? Do not we believe in the same God, and acknowledge the same Mediatour between God and Man? And lastly does not the Apostles Creed contain all the Articles of the Christian Faith, and do not we believe that as well as you? And therefore since we agree with you in Fundamentals, why should you charge us with the Guilt of Schism?

NOW to this I answer, that there may be a *Schism* where there is an entire Agreement in Fundamentals: For not to agree in Fundamentals of Faith, is *Heresie*, and not *Schism*: And *Heresie* and *Schism* do widely differ, tho' they generally lye confounded and undistinguished from each other: Because *Schism*, is not the denying of any Essential or Fundamental Article of Faith, but a causeless and needless Separation from an Establish'd Church; or if you will have it, 'tis a resisting the Authority of those who Rule over us whom we ought to obey, and submit our selves to, according to the Command of the Apostle in my Text. And altho' the Penalty of the Law be now suspended by reason of a general *Toleration*, yet the Precept of the Law is in Force still, and therefore in Equity and Conscience, they are as much oblig'd to *Obedience* as ever, notwithstanding the Severity of the Law is now abolish'd. For a Penalty does not give Being
or

or Essence to a Law, but is only added as an Appendix to enforce its Practise and Observation. And therefore if our Governours (as I have already observ'd) impose no sinful or unlawful Terms of Communion, our Disobedience to them is altogether Defenceless and Inexcusable.

SECONDLY, And 'tis no less our Duty to Obey them if we consider the Dangerous Inconveniency that does always attend the contrary, which equally concerns the Teachers as well as the People of all such Unlawful Assemblies.

FIRST then there is a Dangerous Inconveniency, which concerns the Teachers and Preachers of such separate Congregations to beware of,

F O R whosoever presumes to Preach the Word and to administer the Sacraments, and officiate in Sacred Things, without a Lawful Commission and Authority, he is guilty of the Sin of Sacriledg and invades an Office that don't belong to him, which is a Sin of a very deep Dye, and much like to that of *Corah, Dathan,* and *Abiram*, whose remarkable Punishment is recorded for the Terroure and Example of others. *No Man* (says the Apostle) *taketh this honour*

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unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. And again Rom. 10. 15 *how shall they preach except they be sent?* that is, by their Lawful Rulers and Governours. *verily, verily* (says Christ) *he that entereth not by the Door into the Sheep-Fold, the same is a Thief and a Robber*, John 1. 10. The Emphasis contain'd in these Words, and that Vehemency by which they are express'd, does sufficiently declare the Guilt of such an one, for he is compared to two of the worst of Criminals, even a Thief and a Robber. Neither will it be a proper Answer to say, *That 'tis Zeal for God's Glory that prompts him to it*; for there is an indiscreet Zeal, and a Zeal not according to Knowledge, and doubtless no Zeal or good Intention can justify a bad Action. Thus Uzzab with a harmless and well-meaning Zeal put forth his Hand to succour the Ark of God, but the Lord smote him for it, so that he died immediately before God, 1 Chron. 13. So likewise Uzziah for usurping the Office of the Priests of Aaron, in burning Incense unto the Lord, how dreadfully was he punish'd for that Presumption? He was smitten from Heaven with a foul and loathsome Disease, and carry'd the Marks of the Divine Vengeance with him even to the very Grave. So egregiously mistaken was that pernicious Author of *The Rights, in making the Sacerdotal, dependent on

* A Pernicious and Blasphemous Book, Entituled, *The Rights of the Christian Church asserted*.

on the Regal Power; the Kings of the Earth daring not to meddle with it, in Contempt of the Priests of the most High God. And therefore what a terrible Reprimand did *Uzziah* meet with upon this Account, together with a Stroke from Heaven? *It pertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn Incense unto the Lord, but to the Priests, the Sons of Aaron, that are Consecrated to burn Incense.* 2. Chron. 26. 18. And *Saul*, for the like bold Attempt, not only forfeited the Kingdom of *Israel* himself, but his whole Posterity was curs'd of God, and rejected for ever, 1. Sam. 13. 13.

THESE are dreadful Examples and shew how dangerous it is for Men to act the Priest, and to Officiate in Sacred Things, without being Commission'd and Authoriz'd thereunto. Besides, all that such Unlawful Ministers shall say or do, in the Behalf of themselves or others, is in Danger of being made void and of none Effect: For what an audacious Boldness is it, for any to assume to himself the Title and Character of an Ambassador, and to act in the Name, even of a Temporal King, without his Leave or Authority? Would that King, think ye, confirm or ratifie what such an One should say or do by such a Pretended Commission from him? Nay, Would he not rather be exceeding rigo-

rous in punishing the Confidence and Presumption of this bold Pretender, making him a Spectacle of Scorn and Reproach, of Terrour and Vengeance to discourage others from doing the like again? And can we imagine then, the King of Heaven to be less concern'd for his Honour than the Kings and Princes of this World? Or that the one should connive at such Usurpations more than the other? Moreover, we are assur'd that the *Sacraments*, duly administer'd, are the Means by which God conveys the Graces of his Holy Spirit to us, and a right offering up of Prayers in the Behalf of the People, we believe to be necessary to their Happiness both here and hereafter; And yet 'tis no where said in Scripture, that God will confirm the Sacrament which such Unlawful Officers shall administer, or that he will hear the Prayers which they shall offer up in the Behalf of those who adhere to them: Whereas all Lawful Ministers are assur'd of our Saviour's Ordinary Presence with them, even unto the End of the World, and that he will deny them nothing which they shall ask according to his Will. And therefore

SECONDLY, it concerns the People also to beware of this Dangerous Inconveniency: For, if their Pastors and Ministers be no Lawful Ones, they are then in Communion with no Church;

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Church; for a Church is a Society of Christian People under Lawful Pastors and Governours, and where these are wanting there can be no such Thing as a True Church.

'TIS true indeed the Protestants beyond Sea have no Lawful Pastors and Governours, but this is their Unhappiness, and 'tis owing to a fatal and unavoidable Necessity, and not to a free and voluntary Choice: They highly esteem *Episcopacy*, and would be glad to have it themselves if they could: Insomuch that a certain Divine, in his Historical Letters, observes, that when he and his Companions were in *Geneva*, he found a general Joy in that Town, for this, *that he had given them an Opportunity of expressing the Respect they had for our Church: And as in their Publick Prayers they always pray'd for the Church of Great Britain as well as for the King; so in private Discourse they shew'd all possible Esteem for our Constitutions, and they spake of the unhappy Divisions among us, and the Separations made from us, upon the Account of our Government and Ceremonies, with great Regret and Dislike.*

A N D Mr. Durel tells us, that when certain of our *English* Prelates were conferring with some of the Divines beyond Sea, and urging to them the Necessity and Conveniency of an *Episcopal*

episcopal Government, that one of them answer'd with very great Concern for the Want of it, and said, *Domine, non sumus adeo Felices.*

WHERE Persons are under a fatal Necessity of having no Bishops, there doubtless Christ will dispence with his own Ordinance and Institution: But where a Church is govern'd by a Lawful Ministry, and Men do separate from that Church, not of Necessity, but Choice; Disobedience in such a Case becomes exceeding sinful, and might prove of very pernicious Consequence.

AS to the Ceremonies of our Church, they are but few in Number; for on the one Hand, if they were fewer we should have less Decency in the Worship of God, so on the other Hand if they were more, we should seem as if we plac'd all our Religion in Ceremonies, which are only the Modes and Circumstances of Divine Worship. For which Reason our wise Reformers took the Middle, and consequently the safest Way: They would not have so many Ceremonies as the *Romanists*; nor yet so few as the *Calvinists*, that they might avoid both Extreame, and give no just Offence on either Side. If they say, *our Ceremonies are Popish and Superstitious*, I answer, Is it because we abuse them to Popery and Superstition, as they

they of the Church of *Rome* do? Or is it because that these Ceremonies are retain'd and made Use of by that Church? Now in the first Place we do not abuse these Ceremonies to Idolatry and Superstition, and that the most judicious of our Adversaries do know, tho' they do not care to confess it: They know well enough, that we don't use the *Cross* in *Baptism* in the Nature of a *Charm* or *Spell* to drive away the Evil Spirit; they are sensible enough that we do not sprinkle the Surplice with holy Water, nor yet by Kneeling at the Sacrament, do we adore the Consecrated Elements of Bread and Wine: All this they know very well; but Prejudice has given them such a Byass as draws them from an open and ingenuous Confession of the Truth. If they say, *that these Ceremonies are retain'd and made use of by the Church of Rome*, I answer, What then? Is every Thing made Use of by the Church of *Rome* upon that Account Sinful or Unlawful? Are there not a great many good Things practis'd in that Church, and must we condemn all that is good in it, because some Things have been abus'd to Idolatry and Superstition? To think so, doubtless, is a very great Degree of Weakness and Folly: For in separating from the Church of *Rome*, we did not pretend to make a New Church: but only to Reform the Old One, and therefore all

that

that is good and commendable in that Church may be allow'd of and practis'd by our own.

BESIDES, the Sign of the *Cross* was a Ceremony much us'd in the best and purest Ages of the Church, even some Hundred of Years before *Popery* appear'd in the World: For in the Primitive Times, the Sign of the *Cross* was esteem'd so Sacred and Venerable a Rite, that they did sign themselves with it at the Beginning and Ending of almost all the Common Actions of their Lives: So that either we must condemn the Primitive Church as Idolatrous and Superstitious, or else allow, that this Ceremony is Innocent and Lawful.

AND as for the Ceremony of wearing a Surplice, 'tis said to be as Old as the Council of *Carthage*, wherein 'twas decreed, that all the Clergy or Ministers during Divine Service, should be *Candidis Vestibus induti* array'd with White Robes or Surplices. I shall say but little with relation to the Ceremony of Kneeling at the Lord's Supper, for our Adversaries themselves can comply with it upon Occasion: Now if they can Kneel *occasionally*, why not *constantly*? If they can Communicate with us *sometimes*, Why not *always*?

LAY aside then your former Errors and Scruples and return fairly into the Bosom of the
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the Church, which, like a kind and indulgent Mother, is ready to receive you with open and extended Arms: *Obeys them that have the Rule over you, and submit yourselves, and the Reason why you should, the Apostle gives you in the latter Part of the Text, for they watch (says he) for your Souls, as they that must give Account, that they may do it with Joy and not with Grief for that is unprofitable for you.*

WHAT melting Strains are here! What moving Expressions are these! and How obligingly do they invite you to Obedience, by Arguments drawn from your own Profit, from the Joy of God's Ministers in general, in regard of that great Account: they must one Day give, that they may do it *with Joy and not with Grief.* Not as tho' other Men's Sins would be imputed unto us, provided we don't make them our own by Connivance and Neglect of Duty; and in this Sense we cannot be said to give up our Accounts with Grief, for *the Righteousness of the Righteous shall be upon him, and the Wickedness of the Wicked shall be upon him, the Soul that sinneth it shall die,* Ezek. 18. 20. Notwithstanding, 'tis Matter of real Comfort and great Encouragement to us to see others walk *worthy of the Lord unto all well pleasing,* submitting to Order and Discipline,

26 *The Necessity of Obedience*

Discipline, and holding the *Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.*

THE *Theſſalonians* Conſtancy in the Faith, their zealous and earneſt Striving and Con- tending for it, was to the Apoſtle a Crown of Rejoycing, of Boaſting, and Triumphing. 1. Theſſ. 2 19. *For what (ſays he) is our Hope, our Joy, and Crown of Rejoycing? Are not even ye in the Preſence of our Lord Jeſus at his coming? For ye are our Glory, and our Joy.* And St. John tells us that he rejoyced greatly when the Brethren came and testified of *Gaius* that he walked in the Truth. *I have no greater Joy (ſays he) than to hear that my Children walk in the Truth,* 3. John 4.

WHEREAS 'tis a Matter of very great Concern to all the Miniſters of the Goſpel, to behold ſome walking diſorderly and contrary to the Doctrines they have receiv'd: Others pretending to great Sanctity and Strictneſs of Life, and endeavouring to promote this by Rents and Diviſions in the Church, by Tumults and Seditions in the State; this is enough to make our very Souls to weep in ſecret Places, to mourn and grieve for thoſe who have not ſo much Grace as to do it for them- ſelves: 'Tis the Apoſtle's earneſt and ſervent Prayer, that we might be *all of one Mind, and*
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*of one Soul, walking by the same Rule, and mind-
ing the same thing: And this he calls the ful-
filling of his Joy, the Object of his Desires,
and the Crown of all his Wishes; and he be-
seeches the Philippians by all the Comforts of
Love, by the Fellowship of the Spirit, by the
Bowels of Jesus Christ, and the tender Mercies
of the Gospel, that they would not deprive him
of this his great Joy. If (says he) there be any
Consolation in Christ, if any comfort of Love, if
any fellowship of the Spirit, if any Bowels and
Mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like minded
having the same Love, being of one Accord, of one
Mind. Phil. 2. 1. 2.*

• AND in his Farewell-Speech to the Co-
rinthians how earnestly does he intreat and
exhort them to Peace and Unity, that the
God of Peace and Love might be with them?
And herein he followed the Example of his
Lord and Saviour, the great Shepherd and
Bishop of our Souls, who in his last Agony
pray'd for the Peace and Unity of his Church,
as the greatest Blessing that his Heavenly Fa-
ther could bestow upon it, *that they may be
all one (says he) as thou, Father, art in me,
and I in thee, that they also may be one in us,*
John, 17. 21.

AND

The Necessity of Obedience, &c.

AND therefore, Lord, we beseech thee,
let thy continual Pity cleanse and defend thy
Church; And because it cannot continue in Safe-
ty, without thy Succour, preserve it evermore
by thy Help and Goodness; Deliver our Israel;
O God, out of all its Troubles, and grant that
the Course of this World may be so Peaceably
order'd by thy Governance, that thy Church may
joyfully serve thee in all Godly Quietness, through
Jesus Christ our Lord, To whom with the
Father, &c.

F I N I S.



AND